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(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING A READ TRANSDUCER HAVING IMPROVED PINNING OF THE PINNED LAYER AT HIGHER RECORDING DENSITIES**

(71) Applicant: **Western Digital (Fremont), LLC**,  
Fremont, CA (US)

(72) Inventors: **Gerardo A. Bertero**, Redwood City, CA (US); **Kuok San Ho**, Emerald Hills, CA (US)

(73) Assignee: **Western Digital (Fremont), LLC**,  
Fremont, CA (US)

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CPC ..... **G11B 5/3929** (2013.01); **G11B 5/398** (2013.01); **G11B 5/3163** (2013.01); **G11B 2005/3996** (2013.01)

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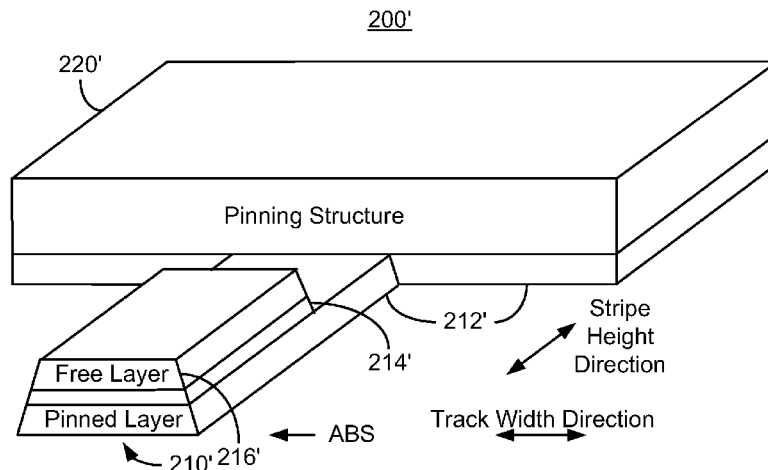
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*Primary Examiner* — Craig A. Renner

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method and system provide a magnetic read transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS). The magnetic read transducer includes a read sensor stack and a pinning structure. The read sensor stack includes a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer. The spacer layer is nonmagnetic and between the pinned layer and the free layer. A portion of the read sensor stack is at the ABS. The pinning structure includes a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer.

**18 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets**



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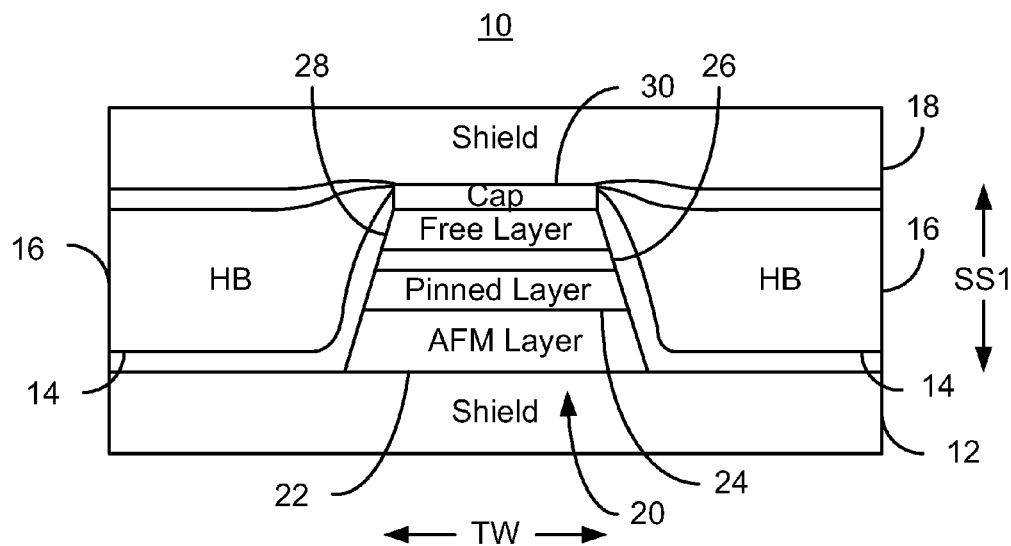
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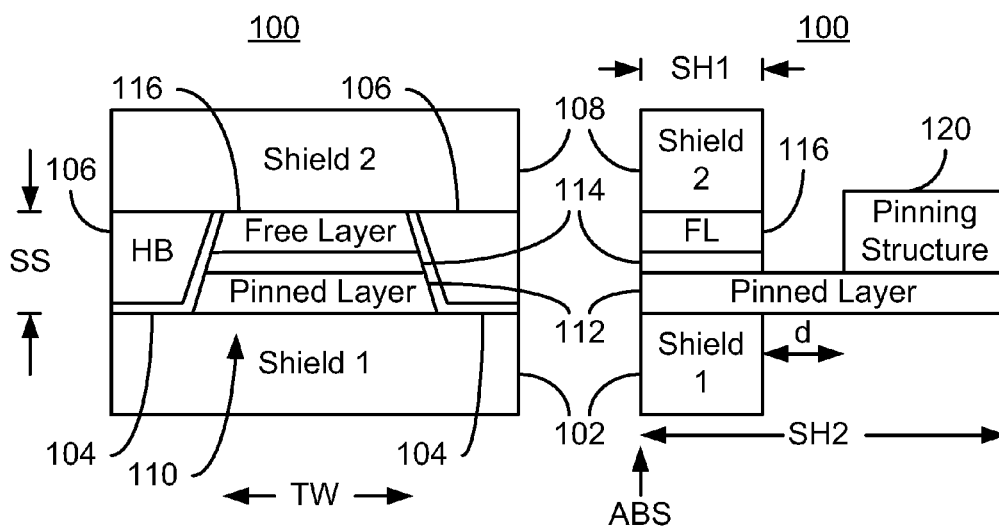
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Prior Art  
FIG. 1



ABS View  
FIG. 2A

Side View  
FIG. 2B

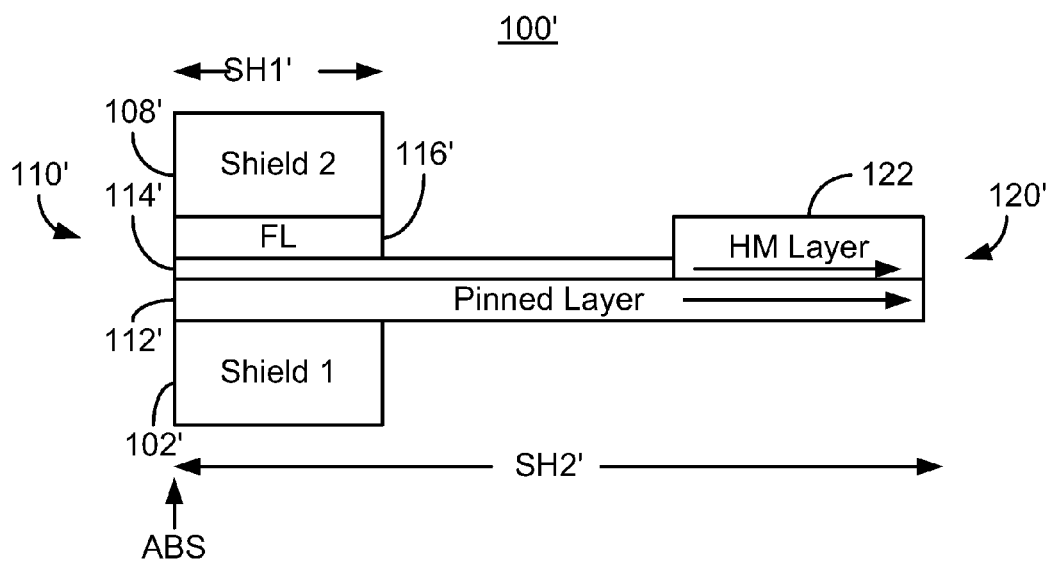


FIG. 3

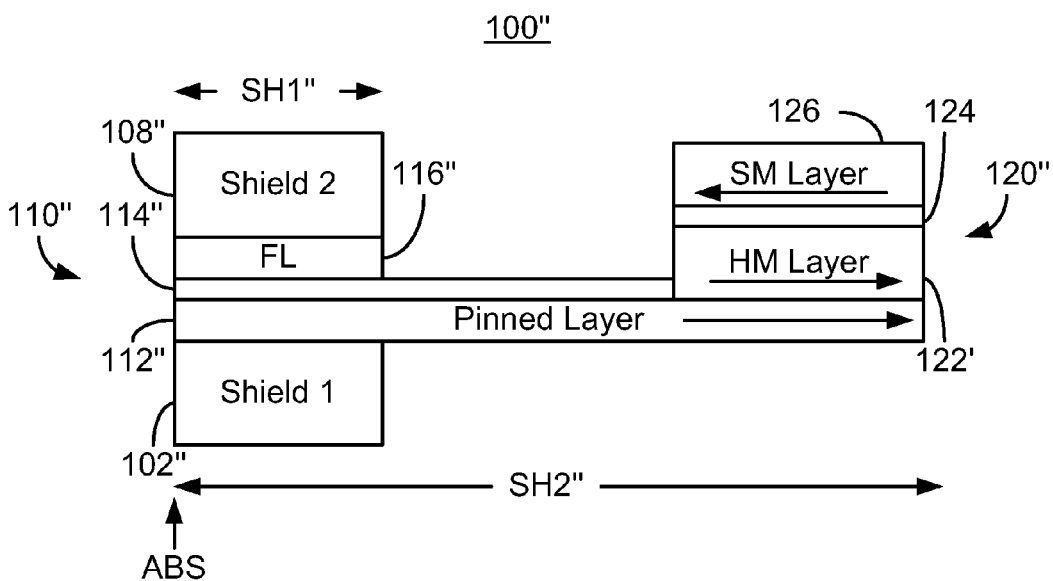


FIG. 4



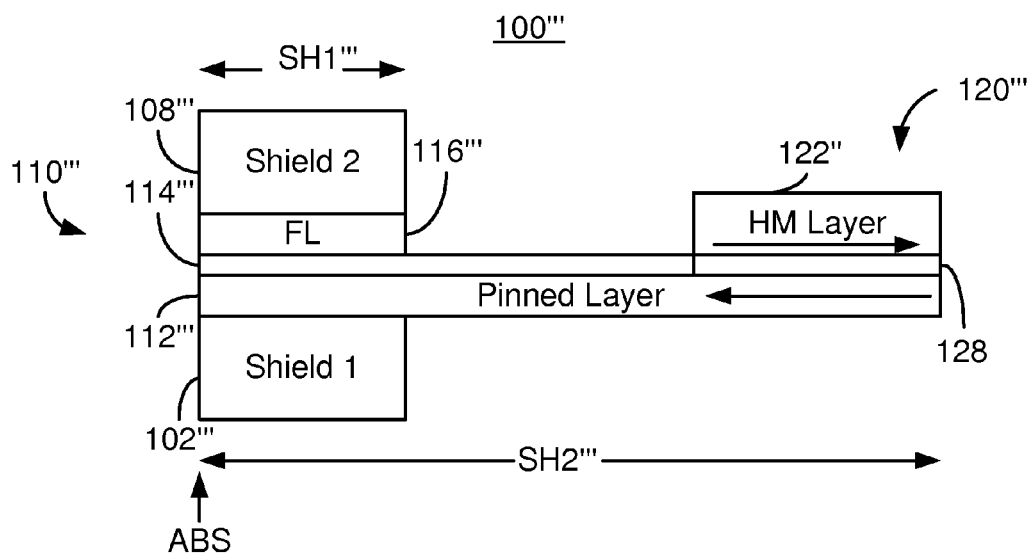


FIG. 5

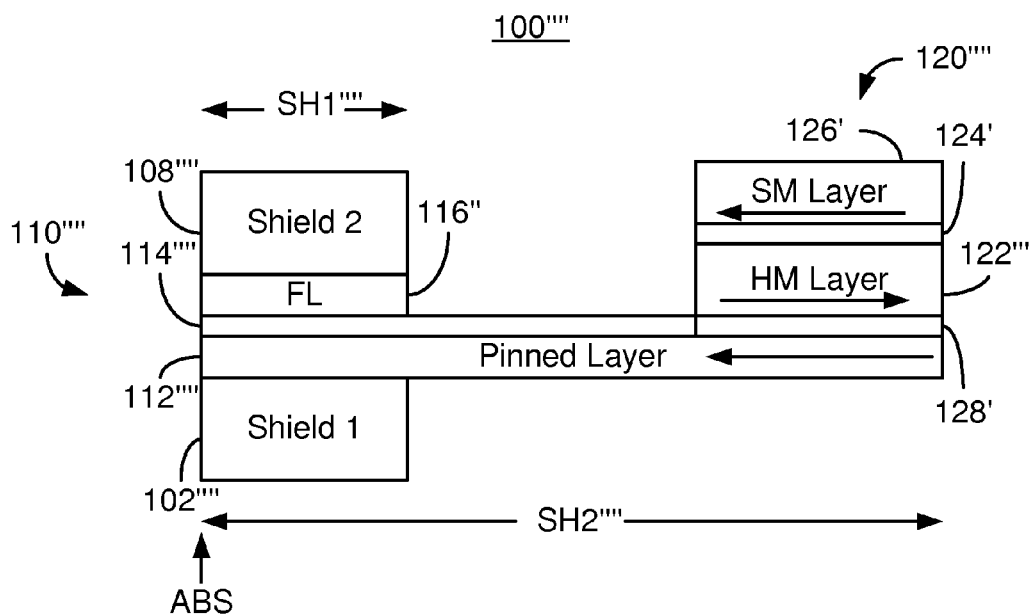


FIG. 6

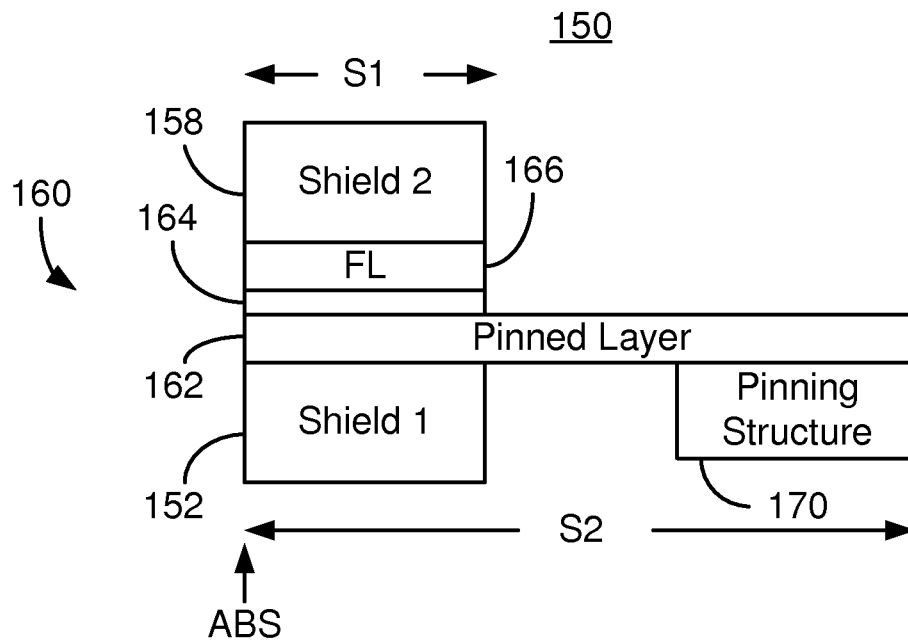


FIG. 7

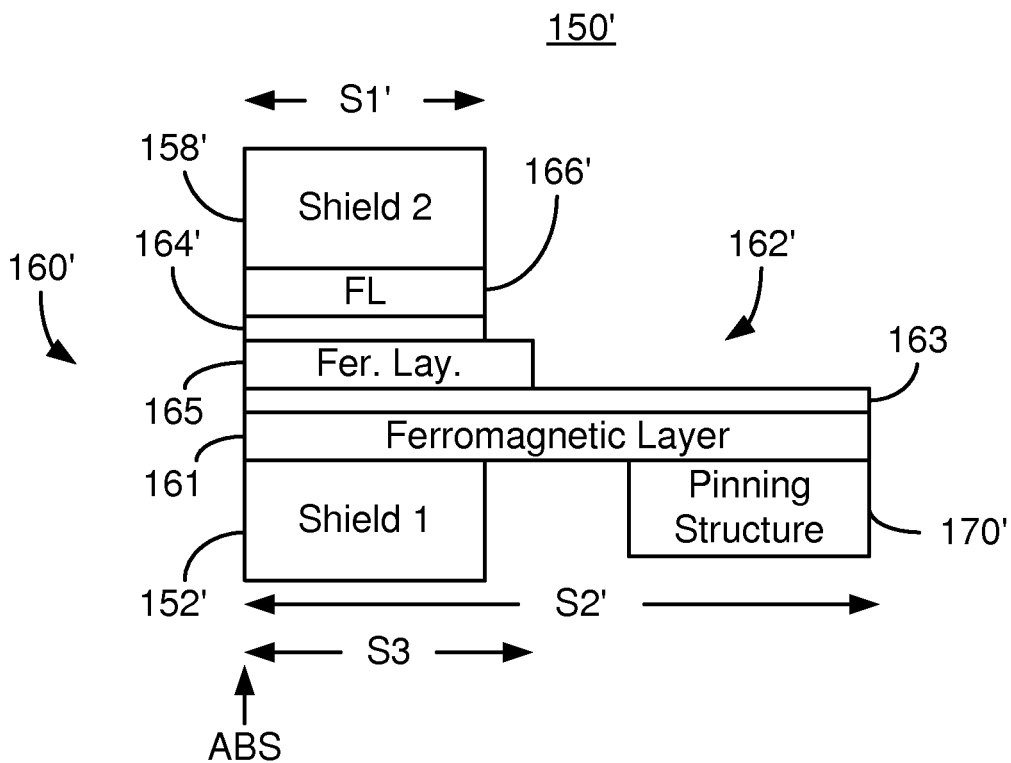


FIG. 8

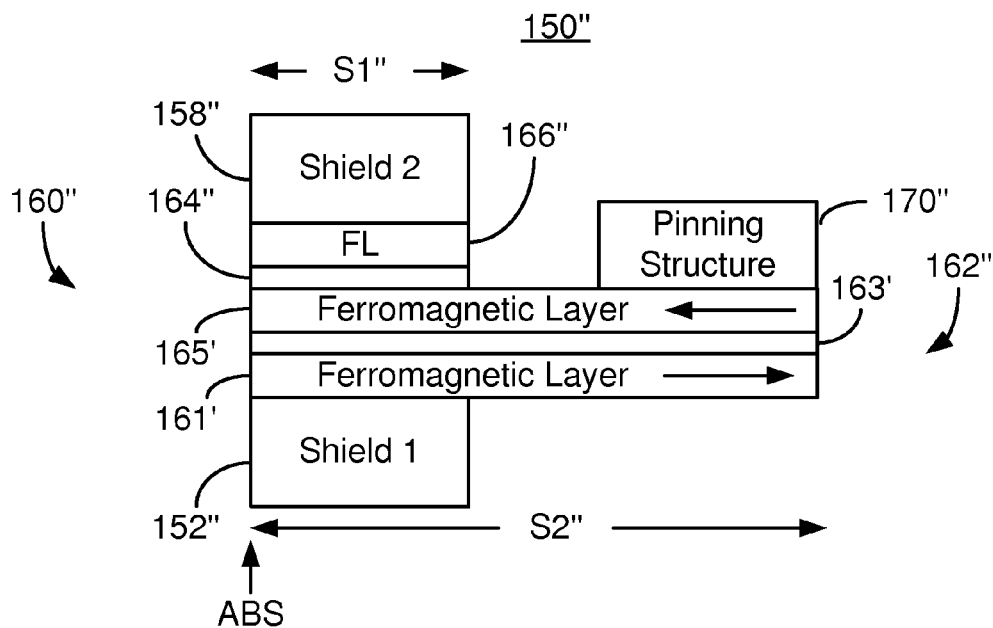


FIG. 9

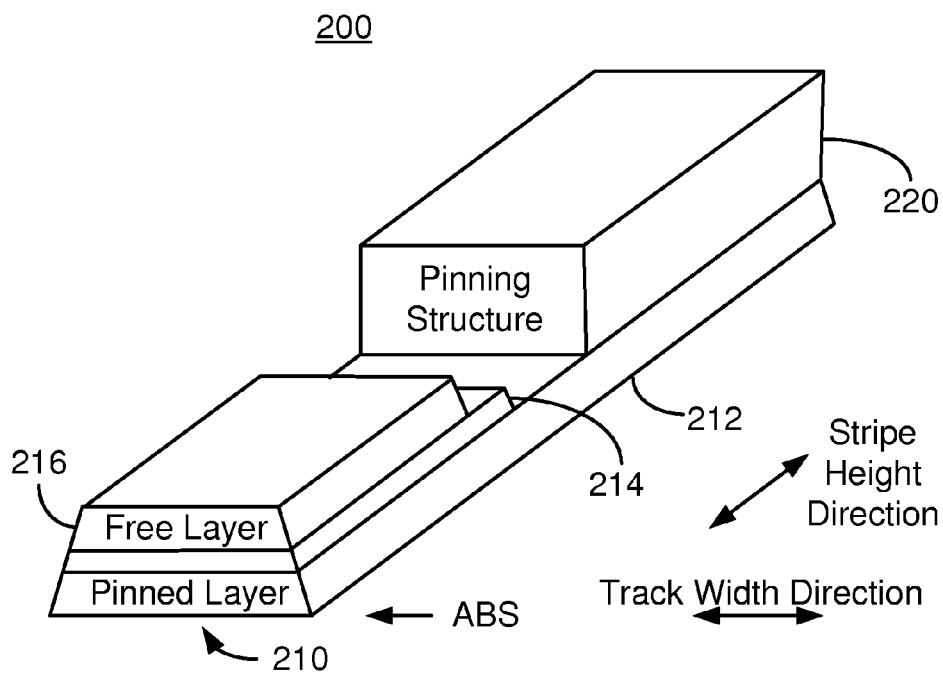


FIG. 10

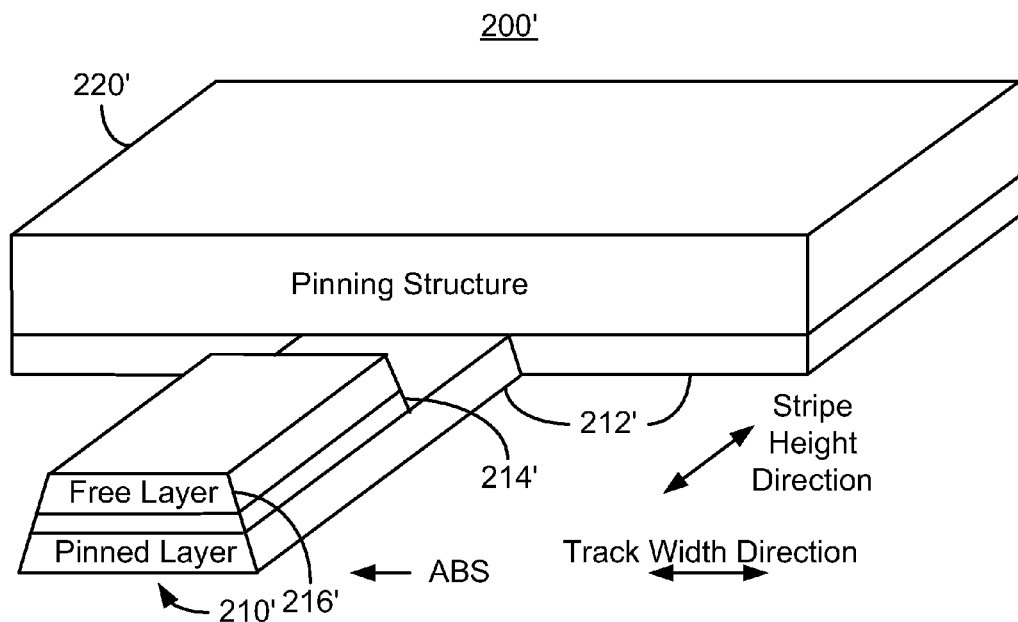


FIG. 11

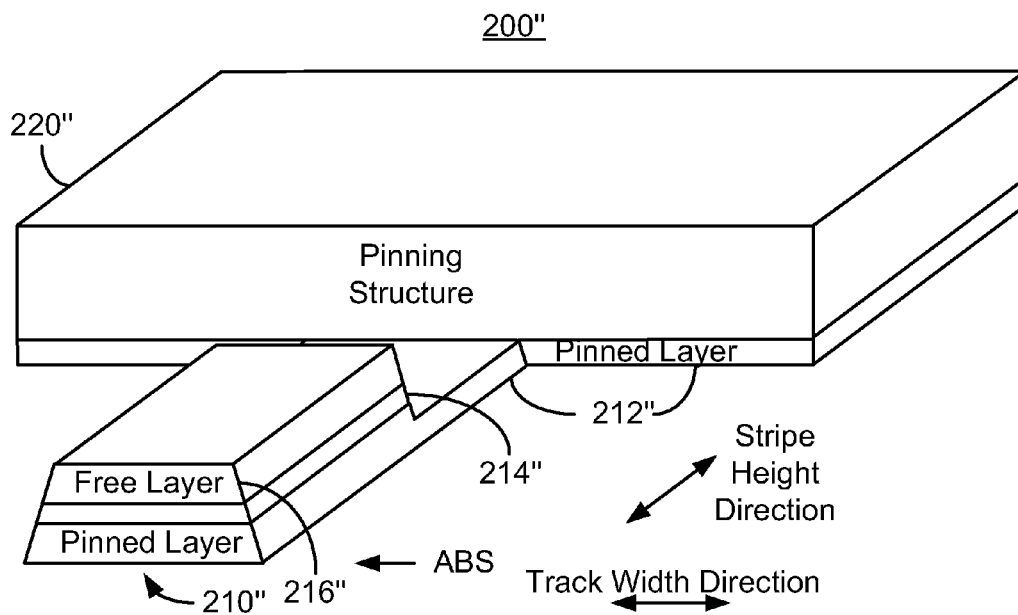


FIG. 12

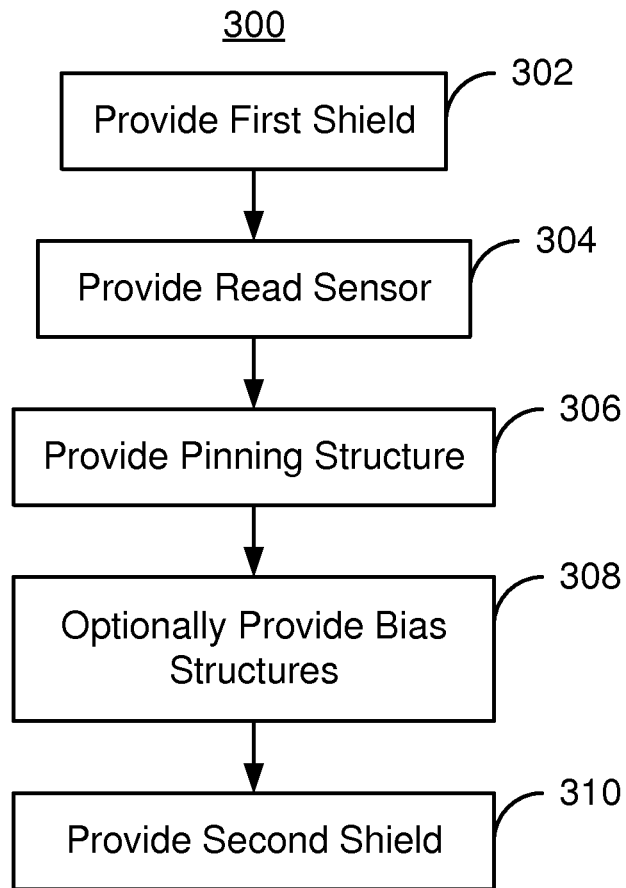


FIG. 13

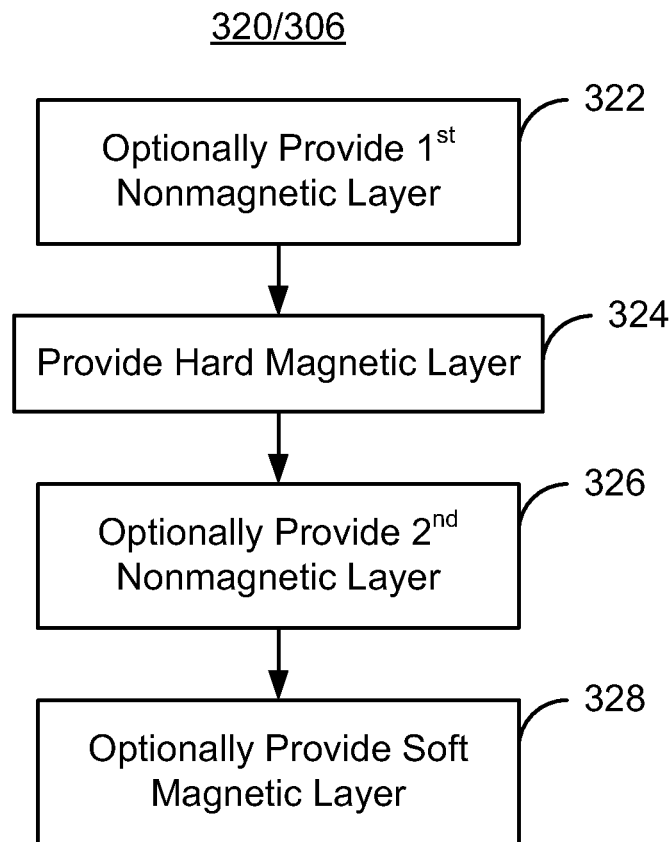


FIG. 14

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# METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING A READ TRANSDUCER HAVING IMPROVED PINNING OF THE PINNED LAYER AT HIGHER RECORDING DENSITIES

## CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/538,660, filed on Jun. 29, 2012, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

## BACKGROUND

FIG. 1 depicts an air-bearing surface (ABS) view of a conventional read transducer used in magnetic recording technology applications. The conventional read transducer 10 includes shields 12 and 18, insulator 14, hard bias structures 16, and sensor 20. The read sensor 20 is typically a giant magnetoresistive (GMR) sensor or tunneling magnetoresistive (TMR) sensor. The read sensor 20 includes an antiferromagnetic (AFM) layer 22, a pinned layer 24, a nonmagnetic spacer layer 26, and a free layer 28. Also shown is a capping layer 30. In addition, seed layer(s) may be used. The free layer 28 has a magnetization sensitive to an external magnetic field. Thus, the free layer 28 functions as a sensor layer for the magnetoresistive sensor 20. If the sensor 20 is to be used in a current perpendicular to plane (CPP) configuration, then current is driven in a direction substantially perpendicular to the plane of the layers 22, 24, 26, and 28. Conversely, in a current parallel to plane (CIP) configuration, then conductive leads (not shown) would be provided on the hard bias structures 16. The hard bias structures 16 are used to magnetically bias the free layer 28. In an ideal case, the hard bias structures 16 match the thickness, moment, and location of the sensor layer 28.

Although the conventional transducer 10 functions, there are drawbacks. The trend in magnetic recording is to higher density memories. A lower track width, TW is desired for reading higher density memories. As track width decreases, the widths of other layers, such as the AFM layer 22, are also reduced. Although the AFM layer 22 can have a reduced width, the size of the crystallographic grains within the AFM layer 22 are desired not to scale with width. This is because smaller grain sizes correspond to a lower blocking temperature for the AFM layer 22. Scaling the grains of the AFM layer 22 would result in an AFM layer 22 that is more disordered at operating temperatures, which is undesirable. However, larger grains for the AFM layer 22 adversely affect the ability of the AFM layer to pin of the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 24 in the preferred orientation. For example, the grains for an IrMn AFM layer 22 are typically on the order of seven to ten nanometers in diameter. An AFM layer 22 that is twenty-five nanometers by thirty nanometers has a significantly reduced number of grains (e.g. on the order of 12) versus an AFM layer 22 that is fifty nanometers by sixty nanometers (e.g. on the order of forty-eight). The quality of the magnetic bias provided by the AFM layer 22 is related to the number of grains in the AFM layer 22. As a result, the ability of the AFM layer 22 to pin the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 24 in the desired direction is compromised at higher densities. Poorer pinning of the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 24 adversely affects performance of the conventional magnetic transducer 10.

In addition, a reduced shield-to-shield spacing, SS1, is desired for higher density memories. For example, for a shield-to-shield spacing for the conventional read transducer

2

10 of approximately twenty-two nanometers, approximately one-third is occupied by the AFM layer 22. The thickness of the AFM layer 22 may be reduced slightly. However, such reductions in the thickness of the AFM layer 22 adversely affect the thermal stability of the magnetoresistive sensor 20. Such instabilities in the magnetoresistive sensor 20 are undesirable.

Accordingly, what is needed is a system and method for improving the performance of a magnetic recording read transducer.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A method and system provide a magnetic read transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS). The magnetic read transducer includes a read sensor stack and a pinning structure. The read sensor stack includes a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer. The spacer layer is nonmagnetic and between the pinned layer and the free layer. A portion of the read sensor stack is at the ABS. The pinning structure includes a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 depicts an ABS view of a conventional magnetic recording read transducer.

FIGS. 2A-2B depicts ABS and side views of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 3 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 4 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 5 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 6 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 7 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 8 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 9 depicts a side view of another exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 13 is flow chart depicting an exemplary embodiment of a method for providing a magnetic recording read transducer.

FIG. 14 is flow chart depicting an exemplary embodiment of a method for fabricating a pinning structure for a magnetic recording read transducer.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

FIGS. 2A-2B depict ABS and side views of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 100. For clarity, FIGS. 2A-2B are not to scale. The read transducer 100 may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 100 is a part is contained in a disk drive

having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, only a portion of the components of the read transducer 100 are depicted

The transducer 100 includes optional soft magnetic shields 102 and 108, optional insulator 104, optional hard biasing layers 106, a read sensor 110 and at least one pinning structure 120. The sensor 110 includes a pinned layer 112, a nonmagnetic spacer layer 114, and a free layer 116. The pinned layer 112 and free layer 116 are ferromagnetic. However, the magnetization of the pinned layer 112 is stable, while that of the free layer 116 may respond to an external magnetic field. The free layer 116 may, however, be magnetically biased by the hard bias layers 106. The hard bias layers 106 may, for example, ensure that the free layer 116 is single domain. The pinned layer 112 is shown as a single layer. However, in some embodiments, the pinned layer 112 may be a multilayer including but not limited to a SAF structure. The free layer 116 is shown as a single layer, but may be a multilayer including but not limited to a SAF structure. In the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112 is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2 that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1. The nonmagnetic spacer layer 114 may be a conductor, an insulator such as a tunneling barrier layer, or other similar structure. In some embodiments, therefore, the sensor 110 is a GMR or TMR sensor. However, there is no AFM layer at the ABS. In other embodiments, such an AFM layer may be included at the ABS. In addition, the pinned layer 112 is an extended pinned layer. Stated differently, the pinned layer 112 extends further from the ABS in the stripe height direction than the free layer 116 (as is shown in FIG. 2B). In the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112' is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2' that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1'.

The pinning structure 120 is used to magnetically bias the pinned layer 112 via an exchange interaction. The pinning structure 120 includes at least one hard magnetic layer (not shown) that is recessed from the free layer 116 by a distance d. The hard magnetic layer may include materials such as Co and/or Fe. The hard magnetic layer may be a single constituent layer, an alloy, a multilayer, or some other structure. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 120 is recessed from the free layer 116 by at least fifty Angstroms. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 120 may be recessed from the free layer 116 by not more than one micron. The pinning structure 120 may also include a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the soft magnetic layer and the hard magnetic layer. In some embodiments, the hard magnetic layer adjoins (i.e. shares an interface with) the pinned layer 112. In other embodiments, there may be a layer between the pinned layer 112 and the hard magnetic layer. For example, the pinning structure 120 may include a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer 114. As used herein, a nonmagnetic layer in the pinning structure 120 is one which, when in the bulk and free from external magnetic fields is nonmagnetic. However, when adjoining a ferromagnetic layer such as the hard magnetic layer, the nonmagnetic layer may be magnetized. For example, the nonmagnetic layer may include Ru.

The pinning structure 120 is adjacent to the pinned layer 112. The pinning structure 120 is shown on the pinned layer 112. However, in another embodiment, the pinned layer 112 may be on the pinning structure 120. The pinning structure 120 may have the same width in the track width direction (TW) as the free layer 116 and pinned layer 112. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 120 is wider than the free layer 116 in the track width direction. In some such embodiments, the pinned layer 112 is also wider than the free layer in

the track width direction at least where the pinned layer 112 is adjacent to the pinning structure 120.

The pinning structure 120 is used to stabilize the pinned layer 112. More specifically, the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 120 magnetically biases, or pins, the magnetization of the pinned layer 112 in the desired direction. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 120 pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112 in a direction perpendicular to the ABS (i.e. the stripe height direction). This pinning may be assisted by the shape anisotropy of the pinned layer 112.

Using the pinning structure 120, the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112 can be stabilized in the desired direction. This may be achieved with a reduced track width of the read sensor 110 and a lower shield-to-shield spacing, SS. The reduction in the shield-to-shield spacing may be achieved at least in part because the AFM layer 22 may be omitted at the ABS. Thus, a read transducer 100 suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 3 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 100'. For clarity, FIG. 3 is not to scale. The read transducer 100' may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 100' is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 100' corresponds to the magnetic read transducer 100. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 100' includes optional shields 102' and 108', nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 110' having pinned layer 112', nonmagnetic spacer layer 114', and free layer 116', optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 120' that correspond to shields 102 and 108, nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 110 having pinned layer 112, nonmagnetic spacer layer 114, and free layer 116, bias layers 106, and pinning structure 120, respectively. Thus, the components 102', 108', 110', 112', 114', 116', and 120' have a similar structure and function to the components 102, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, and 120, respectively. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 100' may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducer 100.

In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 120' consists of a hard magnetic layer 122. The hard magnetic layer 122 has a high anisotropy. For example, the hard magnetic layer may have a magnetic anisotropy of at least  $6 \times 10^5$  ergs/cc. The hard magnetic layer 122 may include materials such as Co and/or Fe. For example, disordered CoCrPt and CoFe alloys, ordered FePt and CoPt alloys, Heusler compounds, and rare earth-transition metal compounds having a high magnetic anisotropy might be used for the hard magnetic layer 122. Other materials may also be used in addition to or in lieu of the above materials. Further, if hard bias structures such as the hard bias structures 106 of FIG. 2A are used, then the hard magnetic layer 122 is desired to be separately configurable from the hard bias structures. For example, the hard magnetic layer 122 may have a different coercivity than the hard bias structures. Thus, the magnetic moments of the hard bias structures may be set independently from the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122. The hard magnetic layer 122 may be a single constituent layer, an alloy, a multilayer, or have another structure. The hard magnetic layer 122 is on a portion of the pinned layer 112' recessed from the ABS and is recessed from the back edge of the free layer 116'. In some embodiments, the hard magnetic layer 122 is recessed from the free layer 116' by at least fifty Angstroms. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 122 may be



5

recessed from the free layer 116' by not more than one micron. Further, the hard magnetic layer 122 adjoins the pinned layer 112'.

The pinning structure 120' is used to stabilize the pinned layer 112'. More specifically, the hard magnetic layer 122 of the pinning structure 120' magnetically biases, or pins, the magnetization of the pinned layer 112' in the desired direction. In the embodiment shown, the hard magnetic layer 122 pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112' in the stripe height direction. Because the hard magnetic layer 122 adjoins the pinned layer 112', their magnetic moments are in the same direction. In the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112' is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2' that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1'. Thus, the pinning structure 120' resides on a portion of the pinned layer 112' recessed from the free layer 116'. Note that if the pinned layer 112' is a SAF, then the ferromagnetic layer adjoining the hard magnetic layer 122 would have its magnetic moment parallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122 while the other ferromagnetic layer would have its magnetic moment antiparallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122. This pinning of the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112' may be assisted by the shape anisotropy of the pinned layer 112'.

The pinning structure 120' shares the benefits of the pinning structure 120. Using the pinning structure 120', the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112' can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 110' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer 122. For example, because the hard magnetic layer 122 is recessed from the ABS, ferromagnetic materials that would corrode if at the ABS may be used for the pinning structure 120' without corrosion issues. Thus, a read transducer 100' suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 4 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 100". For clarity, FIG. 4 is not to scale. The read transducer 100" may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 100" is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 100" corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100 and 100'. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 100" includes optional shields 102" and 108", nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 110" having pinned layer 112", nonmagnetic spacer layer 114", and free layer 116", optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 120" that correspond to shields 102/102' and 108/108', nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 110/110' having pinned layer 112/112', nonmagnetic spacer layer 114/114', and free layer 116/116', bias layers 106, and pinning structure 120/120', respectively. For example, in the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112" is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2" that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1". Thus, the components 102", 108", 110", 112", 114", 116", and 120" have a similar structure and function to the components 102/102', 108/108', 110/110', 112/112', 114/114', 116/116', and 120/120', respectively. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 100" may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducers 100 and 100'.

In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 120" includes not only a hard magnetic layer 122', but also a nonmagnetic layer 124 and a soft magnetic layer 126. The hard magnetic layer 122" corresponds to the hard magnetic layer 122/122'. Thus, the hard magnetic layer 122' may have

6

analogous properties, structure, shape, composition and location as the hard magnetic layer 122. The hard magnetic layer 122' also adjoins the pinned layer 112'. The nonmagnetic layer 124 may include materials such as Ru and separates the hard magnetic layer 122' from the soft magnetic layer 126. The soft magnetic layer 126 may include materials such as Fe, Co, and Ni. The soft magnetic layer 126 also has a low coercivity. For example, the coercivity of the soft magnetic layer 126 may be less than or equal to one hundred Oe. In addition, the soft magnetic layer 126 is magnetically coupled with the hard magnetic layer 122'. In some embodiments, the layers 122', 124 and 126 may be considered to form a SAF.

The hard magnetic layer 122' of the pinning structure 120" is used to stabilize the pinned layer 112" by pinning the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112" in the desired direction. In the embodiment shown, the hard magnetic layer 122' pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112" in the stripe height direction. Note that if the pinned layer 112' is a SAF, then the ferromagnetic layer adjoining the hard magnetic layer 122 would have its magnetic moment parallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122 while the other ferromagnetic layer would have its magnetic moment antiparallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122. This pinning of the pinned layer magnetic moment may be assisted by the shape anisotropy of the pinned layer 112. The soft magnetic layer 126 and nonmagnetic layer 124 may be used to provide flux closure for the pinning structure 120". Thus fringing fields from the pinning structure 120" may be reduced or eliminated.

The pinning structure 120" shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120 and 120'. Using the pinning structure 120", the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112" can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 110' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer 122' because the hard magnetic layer 122' is recessed from the ABS. In addition, the presence of the nonmagnetic layer 124 and soft magnetic layer 126 allow for reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 120". Thus, a read transducer 100" suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 5 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 100"". For clarity, FIG. 5 is not to scale. The read transducer 100"" may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 100"" is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 100"" corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100' and, to an extent, 100". Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 100"" includes optional shields 102"" and 108"", nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 110"" having pinned layer 112"", nonmagnetic spacer layer 114"", and free layer 116"", optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 120"" that correspond to shields 102/102'/102" and 108/108'/108", nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 110/110'/110" having pinned layer 112/112'/112", nonmagnetic spacer layer 114/114'/114", and free layer 116/116'/116", bias layers 106, and pinning structure 120/120'/120", respectively. For example, in the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112"" is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2"" that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1"". Thus, the components 102"", 108"", 110"", 112"", 114"", 116"", and 120"" have a similar structure and function to the components 102/102'/102", 108/108'/108", 110/110'/110", 112/112'/112", 114/114'/114", 116/116'/116", and 120/120'/120", respectively.

Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 100''' may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducer 100.

In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 120''' includes a hard magnetic layer 122''' and a nonmagnetic layer 128'. The hard magnetic layer 122''' corresponds to the hard magnetic layer 122/122'/122''. Thus, the hard magnetic layer 122''' may have analogous properties, structure, shape, composition and location as the hard magnetic layers 122/122'/122''. The nonmagnetic layer 128 is between the hard magnetic layer 122''' and the pinned layer 112'''. The nonmagnetic layer 128 includes materials such as Ru, which allow an indirect exchange interaction between the pinned layer 128 and the hard magnetic layer 122'''.

The pinning structure 120''' is used to stabilize the pinned layer 112'''. More specifically, the hard magnetic layer 122''' of the pinning structure 120''' pins the magnetization of the pinned layer 112''' in the desired direction. In the embodiment shown, the hard magnetic layer 122''' pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112''' in the stripe height direction. This pinning may be assisted by the shape anisotropy of the pinned layer 112'''. Because of the presence of the nonmagnetic layer 128, the magnetic moments of the pinned layer 112''' and the hard magnetic layer 122''' are in opposite directions. Note that if the pinned layer 112''' is a SAF, then the ferromagnetic layer closest to the hard magnetic layer 122''' would have its magnetic moment antiparallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122''' while the other ferromagnetic layer would have its magnetic moment parallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122'''.

The pinning structure 120''' shares the benefits of the pinning structure 120/120'/120''. Using the pinning structure 120''', the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112''' can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 110' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer 122''. For example, because the hard magnetic layer 122'' is recessed from the ABS, ferromagnetic materials that would corrode if at the ABS may be used for the pinning structure 120''' without corrosion issues. Thus, a read transducer 100''' suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 6 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 100'''. For clarity, FIG. 6 is not to scale. The read transducer 100''' may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 100''' is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 100''' corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100'', and 100'''. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 100''' includes optional shields 102''' and 108''', nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 110''' having pinned layer 112''', nonmagnetic spacer layer 114''', and free layer 116''', optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 120''' that correspond to shields 102/102'/102''/102''' and 108/108'/108''/108''', nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 110/110'/110''/110''' having pinned layer 112/112'/112''/112''', nonmagnetic spacer layer 114/114'/114''/114''', and free layer 116/116'/116''/116''', bias layers 106, and pinning structure 120/120'/120''/120''', respectively. For example, in the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 112''' is an extended pinned layer having a stripe height SH2''' that is greater than that of the free layer, SH1'''. Thus, the components 102''', 108''', 110''', 112''', 114''', 116''', and 120''' have a similar

structure and function to the components 102/102'/102''/102''', 108/108'/108''/108''', 110/110'/110''/110''', 112/112'/112''/112''', 114/114'/114''/114''', 116/116'/116''/116''', and 120/120'/120''/120''', respectively. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 100''' may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducers 100, 100', 100'', and 100'''.

In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 120''' includes not only a hard magnetic layer 122'', and a nonmagnetic layer 128', but also a nonmagnetic layer 124' and a soft magnetic layer 126'. The hard magnetic layer 122''' corresponds to the hard magnetic layer 122. Thus, the hard magnetic layer 122' may have analogous properties, structure, shape, composition and location as the hard magnetic layer 122/122'/122''. The nonmagnetic layer 128' corresponds to the nonmagnetic layer 128. The nonmagnetic layer 128' is thus between the hard magnetic layer 122''' and the pinned layer 112'''. The soft magnetic layer 126' and nonmagnetic layer 124' correspond to the soft magnetic layer 126 and the nonmagnetic layer 124, respectively. Thus, the layers 124', 126', and 128' may have analogous properties, structure, shape, composition and location as the layers 124, 126, and 128, respectively. The soft magnetic layer 126' is thus magnetically coupled with the hard magnetic layer 122'' to form a SAF.

The hard magnetic layer 122''' pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112''' in the desired direction. In the embodiment shown, the hard magnetic layer 122''' pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112''' in the stripe height direction. This pinning may be assisted by the shape anisotropy of the pinned layer 112''. Because of the presence of the nonmagnetic layer 128', the magnetic moments of the pinned layer 112''' and the hard magnetic layer 122''' are in opposite directions. Note that if the pinned layer 112''' is a SAF, then the ferromagnetic layer closest to the hard magnetic layer 122''' would have its magnetic moment antiparallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122''' while the other ferromagnetic layer would have its magnetic moment parallel to the magnetic moment of the hard magnetic layer 122'''. The soft magnetic layer 126' and nonmagnetic layer 124' may be used to provide flux closure for the pinning structure 120'''. Thus fringing fields from the pinning structure 120'' may be reduced or eliminated.

The pinning structure 120''' shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120'' and 120'''. Using the pinning structure 120''', the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 112''' can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 110' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer 122''' because the hard magnetic layer 122''' is recessed from the ABS. In addition, the presence of the nonmagnetic layer 124' and soft magnetic layer 126' allow for reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 120'''. Thus, a read transducer 100''' suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 7 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 150. For clarity, FIG. 7 is not to scale. The read transducer 150 may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 150 is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 150 corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', and 100'''. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 150 includes optional shields 152 and 158, nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 160 having pinned layer 162, nonmagnetic spacer layer

164, and free layer 166, optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 170 that correspond to shields 102/102'/102"/102'''/102'''' and 108/108'/108"/108'''/108''''', nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 110/110'/110"/110'''/110''''', having pinned layer 112/112'/112"/112'''/112''''', nonmagnetic spacer layer 114/114'/114"/114'''/114''''', and free layer 116/116'/116"/116'''/116''''', bias layers 106, and pinning structure 120/120'/120"/120'''/120''''', respectively. Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 7 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as those depicted in FIGS. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 150 may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducers 100, 100', 100'', and 100'''.

The pinning structure 170 is shown as residing below the pinned layer 162. Thus, in the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 162 may be fabricated on the pinning structure 170. The pinned layer 162 is thus an extended pinned layer, having a length, S2, in the stripe height direction that is greater than the stripe height of the free layer 166, S1. The geometry and function of the pinning structure 170 may be analogous to that of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120'', 120''', and 120'''''. Thus, the pinning structure 170 includes at least a hard magnetic layer. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170 may include a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer 162. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170 may include a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the soft magnetic layer. In other embodiments, the pinning structure may include some combination of the above embodiments. The hard magnetic layer (not explicitly shown in FIG. 7) pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162 in the desired direction.

The pinning structure 170 shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120'', 120''', and 120'''''. Using the pinning structure 170, the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162 can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 160 and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 170 because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 170 may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 150 suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 8 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 150'. For clarity, FIG. 8 is not to scale. The read transducer 150' may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 150' is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 150 corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', 100''''', and 150. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 150' includes optional shields 152' and 158', nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 160' having pinned layer 162', nonmagnetic spacer layer 164', and free layer 166', optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 170' that correspond to shields 152 and 158, nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 160 having pinned layer 162, nonmagnetic spacer layer 164, and free layer 166, bias layers 106, and pinning structure 170, respectively. Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 8 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as those depicted in FIGS. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer

150' may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', 100'''' and 150.

The pinning structure 170' is shown as residing below the pinned layer 162'. Thus, in the embodiment shown, the pinned layer 162' may be fabricated on the pinning structure 170'. The pinned layer 162' is thus an extended pinned layer, having a length, S2', in the stripe height direction that is greater than the stripe height of the free layer 166', S1'. The geometry and function of the pinning structure 170' may be analogous to that of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120'', 120''', 120''''', and 170. Thus, the pinning structure 170' includes at least a hard magnetic layer. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170' may include a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer 162'. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170' may include a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the soft magnetic layer. In other embodiments, the pinning structure 170' may include some combination of the above embodiments. The hard magnetic layer (not explicitly shown in FIG. 8) pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162' in the desired direction.

In addition, the pinned layer 162' is explicitly shown as a SAF structure. Thus, the pinned layer 162' includes ferromagnetic layers 161 and 165 separated by a nonmagnetic layer 163. The ferromagnetic layer 161 has its magnetic moment pinned by the hard magnetic layer in the pinning structure 170'. In the embodiment shown, the ferromagnetic layer 165 has a reduced stripe height, S3. Thus, in some embodiments, the ferromagnetic layer 165 closer to the free layer 166' may have a length in the stripe height direction of at least S1' and not more than S2'.

The pinning structure 170' shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120'', 120''', 120''''', and 170. Using the pinning structure 170', the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162' can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 160' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 170' because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 170' may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 150' suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 9 depicts a side view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 150''. For clarity, FIG. 9 is not to scale. The read transducer 150'' may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 150'' is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 150'' corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', 100''''', 150 and 150'. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 150'' includes optional shields 152'' and 158'', nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 160'' having pinned layer 162'', nonmagnetic spacer layer 164'', and free layer 166'', optional bias layers (not shown), and pinning structure 170'' that correspond to shields 152/152' and 158/158', nonmagnetic insulating layer 104, sensor 160/160' having pinned layer 162/162', nonmagnetic spacer layer 164/164', and free layer 166/166', bias layers 106/106', and pinning structure 170/170', respectively. Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 9 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as those depicted in FIGS. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the

11

transducer 150" may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 100''', 150 and 150'.

The pinning structure 170" is shown as residing above pinned layer 162", as is shown in FIGS. 2A-6. Thus, in the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 170" may be fabricated on the pinned layer 162". The pinned layer 162" is thus an extended pinned layer, having a length, S2", in the stripe height direction that is greater than the stripe height of the free layer 166", S1". The geometry and function of the pinning structure 170" may be analogous to that of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170 and 170'. Thus, the pinning structure 170" includes at least a hard magnetic layer. In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170" may include a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer 162". In some embodiments, the pinning structure 170" may include a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the soft magnetic layer. In other embodiments, the pinning structure 170" may include some combination of the above embodiments. The hard magnetic layer (not explicitly shown in FIG. 9) pins the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162" in the desired direction.

In addition, the pinned layer 162" is explicitly shown as a SAF structure. Thus, the pinned layer 162" includes ferromagnetic layers 161' and 165' separated by a nonmagnetic layer 163'. The ferromagnetic layer 165' (closest to the free layer 166") has its magnetic moment pinned by the hard magnetic layer in the pinning structure 170". Thus, the ferromagnetic layer 165' has a stripe height that is greater than S1" and is sufficient to provide for at least a fifty Angstrom distance between the free layer 166' and the pinning structure 170". In the embodiment shown, the ferromagnetic layer 165' has a stripe height, S2" that is the same as the ferromagnetic layer 161'. However, in some embodiments, the ferromagnetic layer 165' may have a length in the stripe height direction that is less than S2'.

The pinning structure 170" shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170 and 170'. Using the pinning structure 170", the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 162" can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 160" and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 170" because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 170" may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 150" suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 10 depicts a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 200. For clarity, FIG. 10 is not to scale. The read transducer 200 may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 200 is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 200 corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 100''', 150, 150', and/or 150". Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 200 includes optional shields (not shown), nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 210 having pinned layer 212, nonmagnetic spacer layer 214, and free layer 216, and optional bias layers (not shown) that correspond to shields, nonmagnetic insulating layer, sensor having pinned layer, nonmagnetic spacer layer, and free layer, and bias layers, respectively shown in FIGS. 2A-9. Further,

12

the transducer 200 includes pinning structure 220 that may be analogous to one or more of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170, 170', and/or 170". Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 10 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as one or more of those depicted in FIGS. 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and/or 9. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 200 may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the remaining transducers. In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 220 has substantially the same width in the track width direction as the free layer 216.

The pinning structure 220 shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170, 170', and/or 170". Using the pinning structure 220, the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 212 can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 210 and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 220 because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 220 may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 200 suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

FIG. 11 depicts a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 200'. For clarity, FIG. 11 is not to scale. The read transducer 200' may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 200' is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 200' corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 100''', 150, 150', 150" and/or 200. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 200' includes optional shields (not shown), nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 210' having pinned layer 212', nonmagnetic spacer layer 214', and free layer 216', and optional bias layers (not shown) that correspond to shields, nonmagnetic insulating layer, sensor having pinned layer, nonmagnetic spacer layer, and free layer, and bias layers, respectively shown in FIGS. 2A-10. Further, the transducer 200' includes pinning structure 220' that may be analogous to one or more of the pinning structures 120', 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170, 170', 170" and/or 220. Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 11 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as one or more of those depicted in FIGS. 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and/or 10. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 200' may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the remaining transducers. In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 220' and the portion of the pinned layer 212' adjoining the pinning structure 220' are wider in the track width direction than the free layer 216'.

The pinning structure 220' shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 120''', 170, 170', 170" and/or 220. Using the pinning structure 220, the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 212' can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 210' and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 220' because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 220' may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 200' suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

## 13

FIG. 12 depicts a perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of a portion of a magnetic read transducer 200". For clarity, FIG. 12 is not to scale. The read transducer 200" may be part of a read head or may be part of a merged head that also includes a write transducer. The head of which the read transducer 200" is a part is part of a disk drive having a media, a slider and the head coupled with the slider. Further, the magnetic read transducer 200" corresponds to the magnetic read transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 150, 150', 150"', 200 and/or 200'. Similar components have analogous labels. The magnetic transducer 200" includes optional shields (not shown), nonmagnetic insulating layer (not shown), sensor 210" having pinned layer 212", nonmagnetic spacer layer 214", and free layer 216", and optional bias layers (not shown) that correspond to shields, nonmagnetic insulating layer, sensor having pinned layer, nonmagnetic spacer layer, and free layer, and bias layers, respectively shown in FIGS. 2A-11. Further, the transducer 200" includes pinning structure 220" that may be analogous to one or more of the pinning structures 120', 120", 120"', 170, 170', 170"', 220 and/or 220'. Stated differently, components shown in FIG. 12 have an analogous structure, function, composition, location, and geometry as one or more of those depicted in FIGS. 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and/or 11. Further, although an ABS view is not shown, the transducer 200" may appear substantially the same from the ABS as the remaining transducers. In the embodiment shown, the pinning structure 220" is wider in the track width direction than the free layer 216". In addition, a portion of the pinned layer 212" has been removed during fabrication. However, a sufficient amount of the pinned layer 212" remains such that the pinned layer 212" is still be magnetically biased by the pinning structure 220".

The pinning structure 220" shares the benefits of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 170, 170', 170"', 220 and/or 220'. Using the pinning structure 220", the magnetic moment of the pinned layer 212" can be stabilized in the desired direction with a reduced track width of the read sensor 210" and a lower shield-to-shield spacing. A wider range of materials may also be used for the hard magnetic layer of the pinning structure 220" because the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the ABS. In addition, if layers such as the nonmagnetic layer 124/124' and soft magnetic layer 126/126' are used, reduced fringing fields from the pinning structure 220" may be achieved. Thus, a read transducer 200" suitable for use at higher magnetic recording densities may be provided.

It is noted that a single pinning structure 120, 120', 120", 120"', 170, 170', 170"', 220, 220' and/or 220" is shown in FIGS. 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. However, multiple pinning structures may be used. For example, pinning structures could reside both above and below a pinned layer and/or at multiple locations on the same side of the pinned layer. In addition, one or more of the features of the pinning structures 120, 120', 120", 120"', 170, 170', 170"', 220, 220' and/or 220" may be combined in a particular embodiment.

FIG. 13 is an exemplary embodiment of a method 300 for providing a read transducer utilizing a pinning structure. For simplicity, some steps may be omitted, interleaved, performed in another order and/or combined. The method 300 is also described in the context of providing a single recording transducer 100. However, the method 300 may be used to fabricate multiple transducers at substantially the same time. The method 300 may also be used to fabricate other transducers including but not limited to any combination of 100, 100', 100", 100"', 150, 150', 150"', 200, 200', and/or 200".

## 14

The method 300 is also described in the context of particular layers. A particular layer may include multiple materials and/or multiple sub-layers. The method 300 also may start after formation of other portions of the magnetic recording transducer.

The shield 102 is optionally provided, via step 302. Step 302 typically includes depositing a large high permeability layer. The shield 102 typically extends significantly further in the track width direction than the read sensor 110 or any bias structures 106.

The read sensor 110 is provided, via step 304. Step 304 typically includes depositing the layers for the sensor 110. Step 304 may include blanket depositing the layers for the read sensor, as well as the defining the read sensor from the layers in at least the track width direction in step 304. In some embodiments, the read sensor 110 is defined using an ion mill. In some embodiments, the sensor 110 is also defined in the stripe height direction. In some embodiments, at least some of the layers for the sensor are not completely milled through to provide extended layers. For example, at least part of the pinned layer 112 may not be milled through in the stripe height direction or may be milled at a different distance from the ABS. Thus, an extended pinned layer may be provided. Similarly, the pinned layer 112 may be configured to be larger in the track width direction distal from the ABS, for example in a manner analogous to the pinned layers 212' and/or 212".

The pinning structure 120 that is recessed from the ABS may be provided, via step 306. In some embodiments, step 304 is performed after step 306. In such embodiments, the films for the read sensor deposited after the pinning structure 120 is provided. In such embodiments, the pinned layer 112 may be deposited on and reside on the pinning structure 120. In other embodiments, step 304 is performed before step 306. In such embodiments, the pinning structure 120 is on the pinned layer 112.

The bias structures 106 may optionally be provided in step 308. Step 308 may include depositing hard bias or other analogous structures. The top shield 108 may optionally then be provided, via step 310. Formation of the transducer 100 may then be completed.

Using the method 300, the transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 150, 150', 150"', 200, 200', and/or 200" may be fabricated. Thus, the benefits of one or more of the transducers 100, 100', 100", 100"', 150, 150', 150"', 200, 200', and/or 200" may be achieved.

FIG. 14 depicts an exemplary embodiment of a method 320 for providing the pinning structure. For simplicity, some steps may be omitted, interleaved, performed in another order and/or combined. The method 320 may be viewed as an embodiment of implementing the step 306. The method 320 is also described in the context of providing a single recording transducer 100', 100", 100"' or 100"". However, the method 320 may be used to fabricate multiple transducers at substantially the same time. The method 320 may also be used to fabricate other transducers including but not limited to any combination of 100, 100', 100", 100"', 150, 150', 150"', 200, 200', and/or 200". The method 320 is also described in the context of particular layers. A particular layer may include multiple materials and/or multiple sub-layers. The method 320 also may start after formation of other portions of the magnetic recording transducer.

A nonmagnetic layer is optionally provided adjoining the pinned layer, via step 322. In some embodiments, step 322 includes depositing a Ru layer. However, in other embodiments, other material(s) may be used. Thus, the layer 128/128' may be formed.

15

The hard magnetic layer 122/122'/122"/122'''/122'''' layer is provided, via step 324. In some embodiments, step 324 depositing the hard magnetic layer adjoining the pinned layer 112. However, in other embodiments, for example in which the step 322 has been performed, the hard magnetic layer does not adjoin the pinned layer 112.

The nonmagnetic layer 124/124' is optionally provided, via step 326. In some embodiments, step 326 includes sputtering or otherwise depositing the materials. The soft magnetic layer 126/126' may also optionally be provided, via step 328. Thus, the pinning structure 120, 120', 120'', 120''', 120'''', 170, 170', 170'', 220, 220' and/or 220''.

Using the method 320, the pinning structures of the transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', 100'''', 150, 150', 150'', 200, 200', and/or 200'' may be fabricated. In particular, the pinning structure 120, 120', 120'', 120''', 120'''', 170, 170', and/or 170'' may be provided. Thus, the benefits of one or more of the transducers 100, 100', 100'', 100''', 100'''', 150, 150', 150'', 200, 200', and/or 200'' may be achieved.

We claim:

1. A magnetic transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS) comprising:

a first shield;

a read sensor including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer having a track width, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and the free layer, a portion of the read sensor residing at the ABS, the pinned layer being a synthetic antiferromagnet including a first ferromagnetic layer, a second ferromagnetic layer, and a nonmagnetic spacer layer between the first ferromagnetic layer and second ferromagnetic layer;

a pinning structure recessed from the ABS, the pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer, a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the soft magnetic layer, the pinning structure being recessed from the free layer, the hard magnetic layer being adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width; and

a second shield, the read sensor residing between the first shield and the second shield.

2. A magnetic transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS) comprising:

a read sensor stack including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and the free layer, a portion of the read sensor stack residing at the ABS, the free layer having a track width at the ABS; and

a pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS,

recessed from the free layer and adjoining a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width, the pinning structure further including a magnetically soft layer having a coercivity of not more than one hundred Oe and a nonmagnetic layer, the nonmagnetic layer residing between the magnetically soft layer and the hard magnetic layer.

3. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 wherein the free layer extends a first distance from the ABS and the pinned layer extends a second distance from the ABS, the first distance being less than the second distance.

4. The magnetic transducer of claim 3 wherein the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the free layer by at least fifty Angstroms.

16

5. The magnetic transducer of claim 4 wherein the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the free layer by not more than one micron.

6. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 wherein the hard magnetic layer has a magnetic anisotropy of at least  $6 \times 10^5$  ergs/cc.

7. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 wherein the pinned layer has a first side and a second side, the first side being closer to the free layer than the second side and wherein the hard magnetic layer is closer to the first side than the second side.

8. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 wherein the pinned layer has a first side and a second side, the first side being closer to the free layer than the second side and wherein the hard magnetic layer is closer to the second side than the first side.

9. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 wherein the pinned layer is a synthetic antiferromagnet including a first ferromagnetic layer, a second ferromagnetic layer, and a nonmagnetic spacer layer between the first ferromagnetic layer and second ferromagnetic layer.

10. The magnetic transducer of claim 2 further comprising: at least one biasing structure adjacent to the free layer, a portion of the at least one biasing structure residing at the ABS.

11. A magnetic transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS) comprising:

a read sensor stack including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and the free layer, a portion of the read sensor stack residing at the ABS, the free layer having a track width at the ABS; and

a pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width, the pinning structure including a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer, a magnetically soft layer having a coercivity of not more than one hundred Oe, and an additional nonmagnetic layer, the additional nonmagnetic layer residing between the magnetically soft layer and the hard magnetic layer.

12. A disk drive comprising:

at least one disk;

at least one slider including at least one magnetic transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS), each magnetic transducer including a read sensor stack and a pinning structure recessed from the ABS, the read sensor stack including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and the free layer, a portion of the read sensor stack residing at the ABS, the free layer having a track width at the ABS, the pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer, a soft magnetic layer and a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the soft magnetic layer, the hard magnetic layer being recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width.

13. A method for providing a magnetic read transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS) comprising:

providing a read sensor stack including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and

17

the free layer, a portion of the read sensor stack residing at the ABS, the free layer having a track width at the ABS; and

providing a pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjoining a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width, the step of providing the pinning structure further including

providing a magnetically soft layer having a coercivity of not more than one hundred Oe; and

providing a nonmagnetic layer, the nonmagnetic layer residing between the magnetically soft layer and the hard magnetic layer.

**14.** The method of claim **13** wherein the free layer extends a first distance from the ABS and the pinned layer extends a second distance from the ABS, the first distance being less than the second distance.

**15.** The method of claim **14** wherein the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the free layer by at least fifty Angstroms.

**16.** The method of claim **15** wherein the hard magnetic layer is recessed from the free layer by not more than one micron.

**17.** The method of claim **13** wherein the pinned layer is a synthetic antiferromagnet including a first ferromagnetic

18

layer, a second ferromagnetic layer, and a nonmagnetic spacer layer between the first ferromagnetic layer and second ferromagnetic layer.

**18.** A method for providing a magnetic read transducer having an air-bearing surface (ABS) comprising:

providing a read sensor stack including a pinned layer, a spacer layer, and a free layer, the spacer layer being nonmagnetic and residing between the pinned layer and the free layer, a portion of the read sensor stack residing at the ABS, the free layer having a track width at the ABS; and

providing a pinning structure including a hard magnetic layer recessed from the ABS, recessed from the free layer and adjacent to a portion of the pinned layer, the pinning structure having a width greater than the track width, the step of providing the pinning structure further including

providing a nonmagnetic layer between the hard magnetic layer and the pinned layer;

providing a magnetically soft layer having a coercivity of not more than one hundred Oe; and

providing an additional nonmagnetic layer, the additional nonmagnetic layer residing between the magnetically soft layer and the hard magnetic layer.

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